

The Address—Mr. Rynard

• (4:50 p.m.)

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, this particular area to which I refer is one where people live all year round. Operators of hotels and motels do not close up on September 1 or shortly thereafter but continue to remain open on a 12-month basis. They have people working for them the year round. Week end tourists are guests and they receive visitors during the skidoo season. Buildings are being repaired or constructed and rooms re-furnished.

To cut these type of people off, Mr. Speaker, is sheer folly. We spend millions of dollars on advertising for tourists to come to this country, and then we destroy the very magnet that draws them. This is not common sense. I am sorry that the Postmaster General (Mr. Kierans) is not present to listen to me, because this is exactly what he is doing by these post office closures. The minister is drawing no line of distinction. Surely there is a very clear-cut line of distinction between these hotel and motel operators to which I have referred, and summer cottagers. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the minister to take another look at this problem, because if he continues to lose tourist dollars in this way he will likely hear more about the matter from other sources.

In addition to this, Mr. Speaker, there is the question of notice. How much notice were these people given? As I understand it, they received ten days. They had to prepare bookings for the following year, forward literature with their address printed on it, and so on. Port Stanton post office has been in existence for 100 years. If this not folly of the worst sort, I do not know what is. I trust the minister, who I think and hope is a very sensible man, will get busy right away and correct this situation. Do not let us rob Peter to pay Paul, which is what happens when post offices such as this are closed. When post offices remain open all year round, money is coming in. One hotel operator told me that on average he receives 5,000 letters a month, and there are six or seven hotels or motels in that area.

I also want to draw attention, Mr. Speaker, to this just society. As I listened to the speech from the throne it became apparent that it would take time to find the problems that exist. However, Mr. Speaker, let me assure you that they do exist right now. A tremendous amount of work has to be done by the just society. For example, take the case of the old age pensioner. There are approximately

one and a half million people in Canada 65 years of age or over. Most of them worked during the thirties for one quarter of what they could earn today; that is, if they were lucky enough to have found a job in those days.

The little they have saved has been eroded by inflation to the extent that it now buys less than half of what it bought originally. Succeeding governments have been eroding the value of the dollar, which has caused inflation. Priorities are not required to discover that; all we need do is look around us. Last year the dollar was eroded by almost 5 per cent. What we did was to give the pensioners a 2 per cent increase and take 5 per cent away from them. What a way to treat the senior citizens of this country! There is a commandment that says that you should "honour thy father and thy mother". Are we doing this when old age pensions are so scandalously low and housing is wholly inadequate?

I am sure that everyone in the house agrees that our employment policies are geared to youth. Ask a man 50 years of age, and unemployed, whether he can get a job. In addition, the leisure needs of the elderly people of this country are completely ignored. According to statistics, about 60 per cent of these people have little or no money and they qualify for the supplement. Many of the remaining 40 per cent have great difficulty making ends meet. When we talk of priorities, Mr. Speaker, this particular priority is there for everyone to see.

Another matter that bothers me, and I am sure many other members of the House of Commons who stop to think about it, is this: After we passed the legislation which gave the pensioners \$75 a month, we waited a while before inserting an escalation clause increasing the amount, if necessary, by 2 per cent. In the meantime the cost of living increased almost 5 per cent. This is really treating people who cannot help themselves in a Scroogian way.

A just society, Mr. Speaker, would have tied the increase in remuneration to the cost of living. A just society would have given these pensioners \$100 a month. Our party supported such a move, and it would have meant there would be no peeping Toms annoying and worrying our senior citizens in this land, as is the case now. Tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, we in this house will be the senior citizens, if we live that long.